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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001585

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/13

TAGS: PREL PHUM ELAB PGOV UZ

SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: Human Rights Activist Beaten

CLASSIFIED BY: Holly Lindquist Thomas, P/E Officer, State, Tashkent;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Human rights activist Bahtiyor Hamroev, a good contact of the Embassy from Jizzakh province, reported he was beaten by law enforcement on Wednesday, November 11, when he tried to meet recently returned opposition figure Bahodir Choriev in a Jizzakh cafC). A second activist, Mamir Azimov, was taken to a police station and beaten more severely for the same reason. Neither activist was seriously injured, and both plan to file complaints with the local prosecutor's office. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Hamroev reported that in the morning of November 11, law enforcement arrived at the homes of four human rights activists in Jizzakh (Hamroev, Azimov, Uktam Pardaev, and Saida Kurbonova), harassed them, and brought Azimov and Pardaev in for questioning before releasing them shortly thereafter.

¶3. (C) Around 1:30pm, recently returned leader of the Birdamlik opposition party Bahodir Choriev and local coordinator for the party Dilorom Isakova called to invite Hamroev and Azimov to lunch. Choriev was reportedly a successful businessman when he entered the political scene in 2004 and called for President Karimov's resignation. He was badly beaten in May 2004, and left Uzbekistan soon after that for the United States, where he has received some attention as the "trucker" opposition leader, driving a truck, meeting with other Uzbek transplants, and telling anyone who would listen about the situation in Uzbekistan. In August of this year, he led a protest and brief hunger strike against Radio Free Liberty/Radio Liberty, complaining about what he considered its censorship of Uzbek issues and demanding equal air time for all Uzbek opposition leaders. He returned to Uzbekistan in mid-October, and has been closely watched by authorities since his arrival at the airport, where officials reportedly confiscated several "Birdamlik" hats and t-shirts.

¶4. (C) The four activists had just sat down at a local cafC) when plain clothes officers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs suddenly approached them and took Azimov away. Hamroev, Choriev, and Isakova, were left alone, but they left the cafC) and decided to

talk in Hamroev's car. About a half hour later, the plain clothes officers reappeared. One jumped in the back seat, tried to push Hamroev out of the car, and began beating him. Very quickly, 10 more officers from the MIA appeared at the car and told the group that they should follow the officers to the local MIA offices.

¶15. (C) The three activists agreed to follow the officers to the station, but on the way turned off. Choriev and Isakova dropped Hamroev off at his home and set off for Samarkand. As of the writing of this cable, there have been no reports that officers have tried again to bring any of the three in for questioning.

¶16. (C) Activist Azimov did not get off so easily. He told Hamroev that he was taken to an MOI office and forced into a small room where officers from the criminal investigation office beat and kicked him for more than an hour, leaving only his face free from damage. The investigators told him not to pursue medical treatment, or that he might suffer an "accident," that would result in more harm to him. Despite this warning, Azimov went to the local hospital. The hospital administration refused to admit him. The following day, Hamroev and Azimov agreed that they would both file complaints with the city and district prosecutor's offices.

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¶17. (C) Comment: Poloff met with all of these activists last week in Jizzakh, but that meeting doesn't seem to be the basis for these attacks. While it is not clear why law enforcement harassed activists in the morning (perhaps they had word that Choriev was coming), the violence against both Hamroev and Azimov seems to have been motivated by their meeting with Choriev. End comment.

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